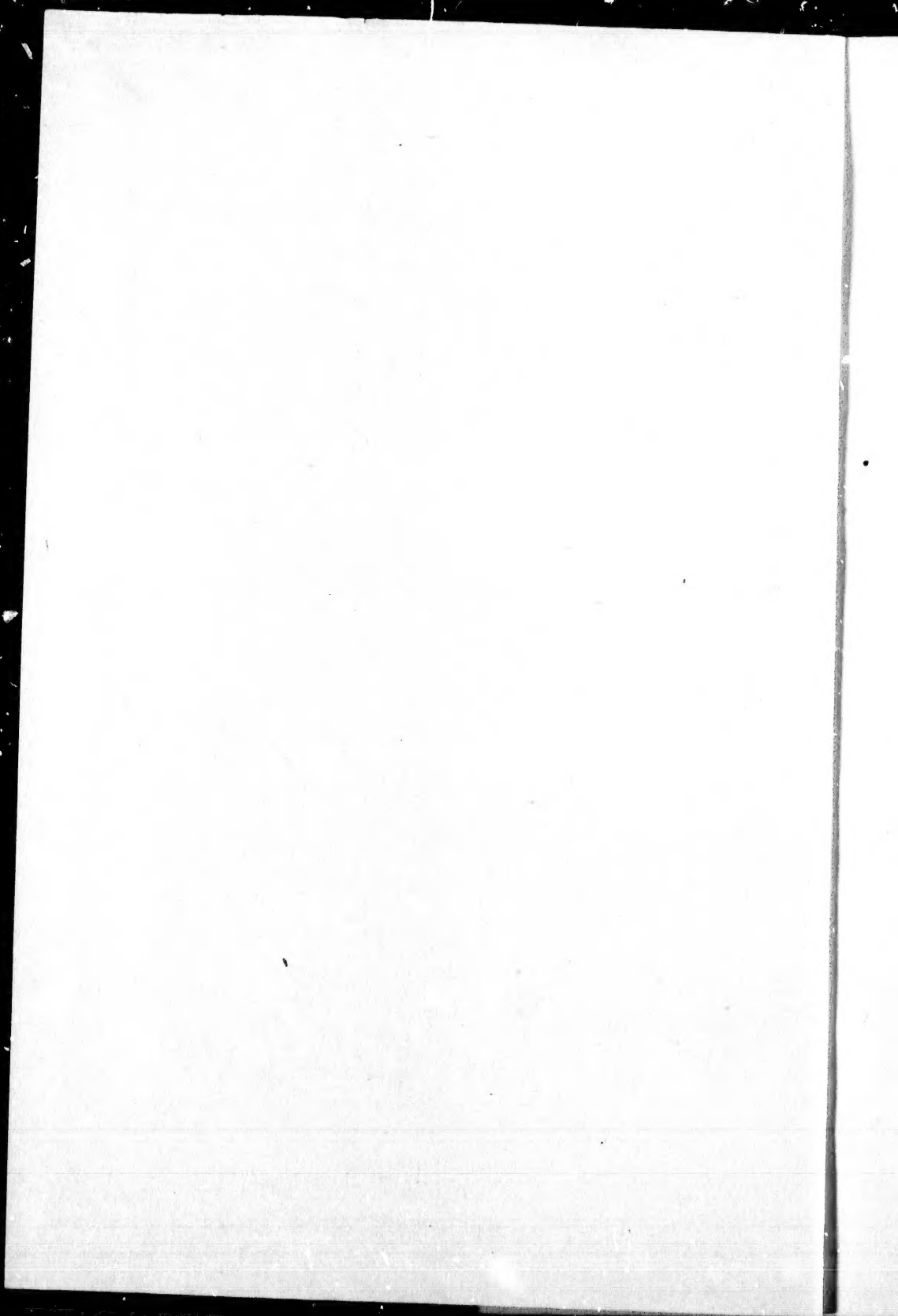


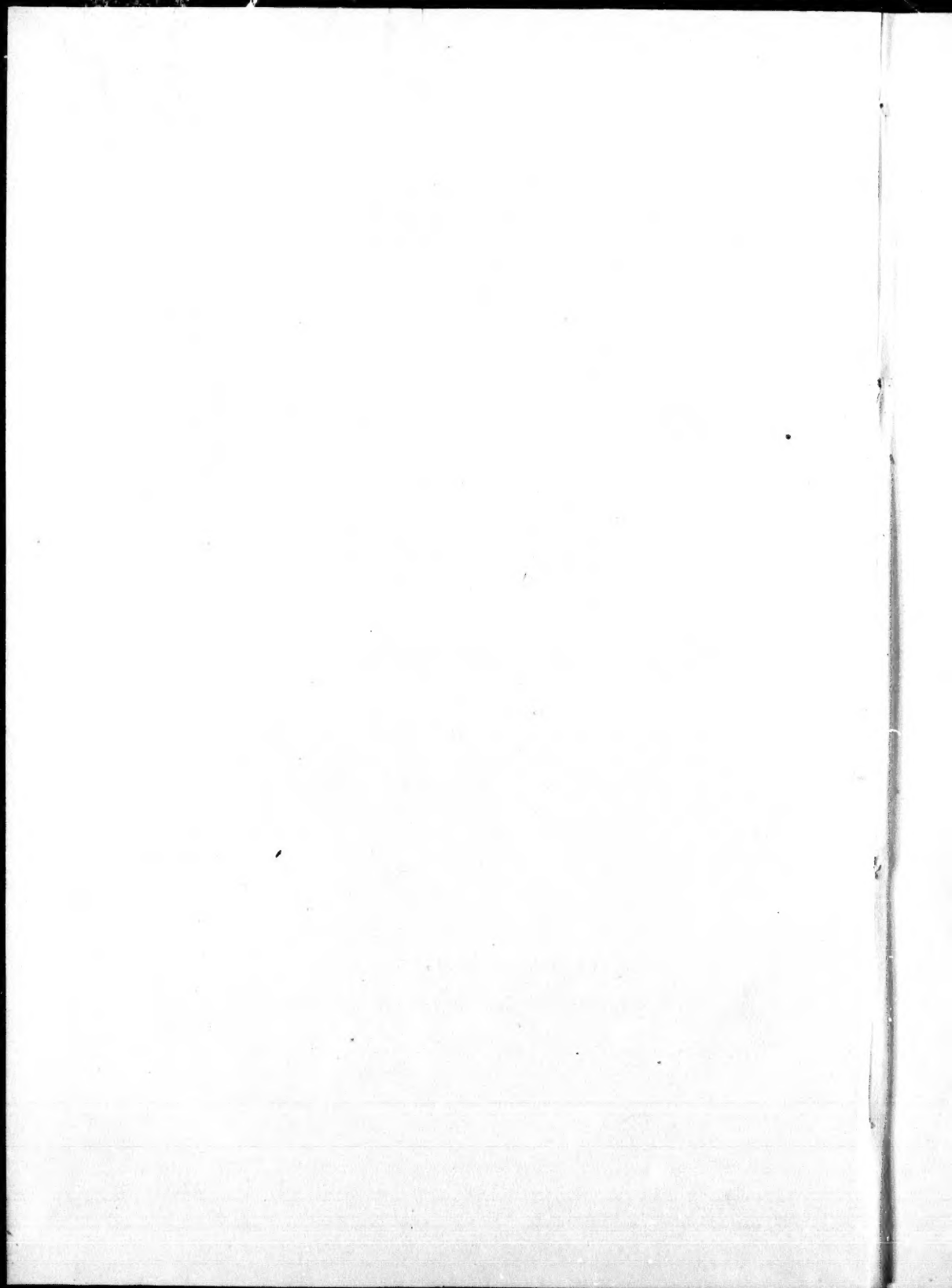


T

SHORT
SPECULATIVE
ESSAYS.

BY
ROBERT BROCKHOLES THOMAS.

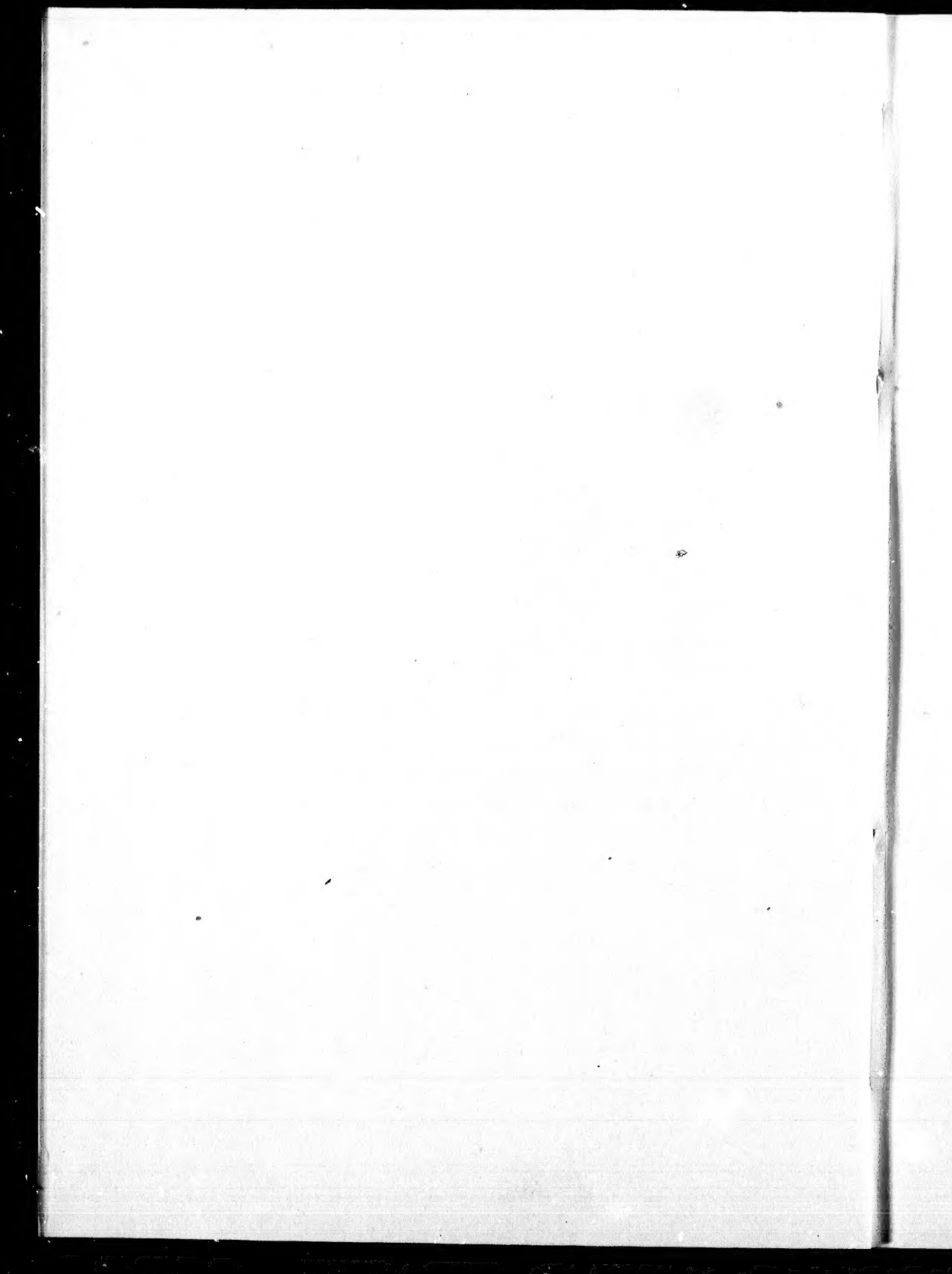
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 TAKE the liberty of inscribing these few short pages to Malcolm McLeod, Q. C.; not with the faintest intention of using his name to endorse any of the views contained therein, but as a mark of respect for a very close and able reasoner; and also as an expression of personal regard and esteem for one who ranks high among the leading men of thought in Prince Edward Island.

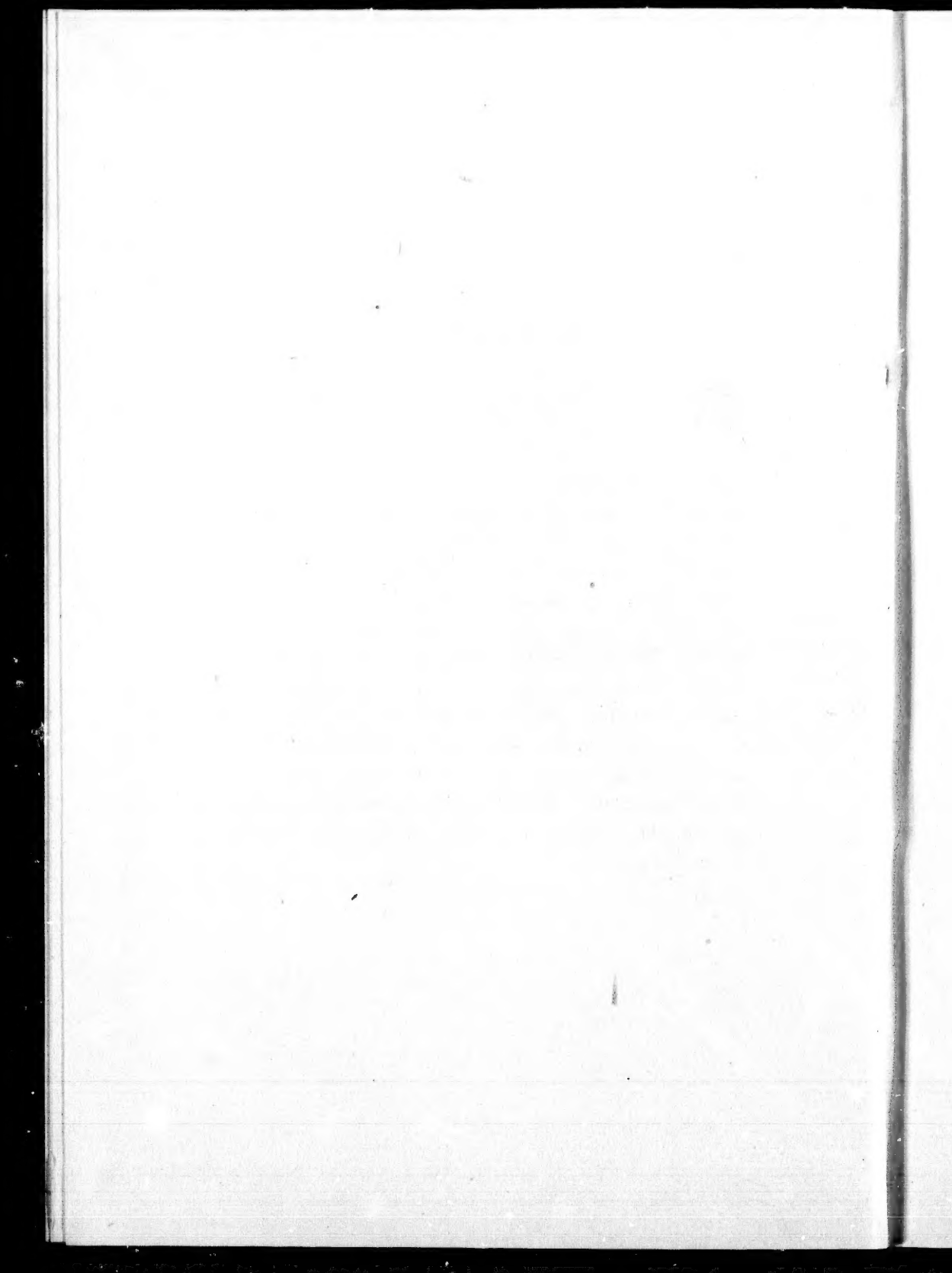
ROBT. B. THOMAS.

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island,
April 27th, 1882.



PREFACE.

SOME explanation is necessary in offering to the public dissertations, in so brief a form, upon matters which embrace such vast considerations. It is evident that each of the subjects thus slightly touched upon, affords inexhaustible matter for study and research: but the present object is to regard them from a single point of view, dealing only with generalities which bear upon a special result, rather than to attempt elaborate definitions, or to refine upon questions which involve endless intricacies of detail. In this, an endeavour has been made to avoid adding weariness to the hour, which, it is hoped, may be neither unpleasantly nor unprofitably passed in the perusal of this small volume.



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ERRATA.

- Page 49, line 12th, for *ligitimate* read *legitimate*.
" 53, " 18th, for *primative* read *primitive*.
" 65, " 21st, for *accountable* read *unaccountable*.
" 84, " 12th, for *existancee* read *existence*.

GOOD AND EVIL.



God and Evil.

EXPERIENCE is constantly proving that notions which have been for ages accepted as truths, may undergo—when tested by some revolution in thought or circumstance, some new scientific discovery, or some new light thrown upon them—a radical change, leading to a conviction utterly opposed to that which had previously been considered unalterably settled. Without presuming to predict such a result to the following propositions, they are advanced with the above prelude, as a legitimate plea to excuse, and possibly to justify, their disagreement with widely accepted ideas.

In regarding questions relating to good and evil from a metaphysical point of view, and outside of any theological considerations, we have no data whereby we can arrive by induction at any conclusion; they are, like all other questions on final causes, insolvable. But we can draw inferences from known results, as to the expediency, and also as to the necessity of existing conditions, and these inferences are more or less correct, according to their agreement with universal laws, which work with such exact precision that any apparent irregularity may safely be attributed to our weakness of perception, and an incompetency to follow the workings of creation in their entirety. It is therefore here submitted for consideration—solely in a philosophical spirit of enquiry—whether the relation of good and evil to pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, hope and despair, and all other matters which are commonly accepted as representative of good and evil, may not be regarded in one comprehensive view, bearing only upon general results; and whether good and evil may not only *not* be clearly defined, separate, and antagonistic entities, but simply modifications of one general principle; the component parts of a whole,

which, without either one or the other, would be imperfect in its application to human requirements.

It has occasionally been argued—and notably by that deep thinker and possessor of high mental attainments,—John Stuart Mill—that the existence of a large amount of suffering, and of all that which is called evil, is proof that the Ruler of the universe is either a maleficent being, or that he has not adequate power to control it. Now this is a radical question, the solution of which involves the whole matter.

If the predominance of evil is proof of maleficence in the Deity, it must be admitted that predominance of good is proof of the reverse: and if it can be established that evil—so called—is not an active principle, but a necessity of physical existence, and a requirement for the proper development of the capacity of our mental and moral faculties, which is eliminated as it is utilized; being merely—if the expression is admissible—a space for their extension, as darkness is to light; then the *power* of good is clearly illimitable.

Whatever theory we may entertain relative to perfection, as the elimination of all evil,

we must nevertheless confine ourselves to facts as we find them. Perfection is beyond our grasp; but progression is unmistakably a great and a leading principle in the economy of nature; and it is quite beyond human conception to assign to it a culminating point. We must, we can only take our ideas of perfection from a human standpoint, and consequently they are ruled and restricted by the arbitrary effect of phenomena upon our sentient existence. It has been assumed that a *benevolent* Omnipotence would have endowed creation with perfect attributes; but this—although apparently at the first glance a sound conclusion—is nevertheless a hasty and a thoughtless one, for it involves a contradiction, inasmuch as it would have rendered useless to us those very attributes with which in our ideas we invest perfection, and without the influence of which existence would be a blank void. If perfection were thus obtained, we should have no sense of goodness, as we should never have known it by comparison; there would be nothing to call forth energy and action, or the exercise of moral virtues; no end to attain; no hopes to indulge; no desires to gratify; no emulation to excite us; no progression to

rejoice us ; a dead past ; a blank, passionless, objectless present ; and an eternity of inaction before us. Perfection itself would amount only to the Brahminical conception of it—complete obliteration of sensation, amounting to nothingness. This is viewing the result of perfection to humanity from the only point which is available to human nature ; subject as it is to human passions and desires ; bound by human attributes ; and confined to ideas which emanate from those attributes. What it may be on other conditions, is beyond the scope even of our imagination ; as it cannot be otherwise than commensurate with infinity ; embracing omnipotence or it would not be perfection ; an omnipotence which must necessarily be unique, or it would not be omnipotence : the ways of which we thus have full assurance are not as our ways, and past finding out.

On the other hand progression has its stages : and hopes realized, desires gratified, and difficulties joyfully overcome, are succeeded by higher hopes, purer desires, and fresh incentives to action ; all yielding never-ending gratification : and an ultimate perfection is not only as inconceivable as a limit to time or space,

but any finality is undesirable, as a limit to the glorious heights of advancement, through an eternity of time, and an infinity of space which it is competent for the imagination to dwell upon.

If then, good would be an unrecognized, and an inappreciable quantity, subject to no comparative distinction, were it not presented to us in a qualified form; it follows, that for a proper appreciation of it; for the development of human attributes; for the full enjoyment of existence; and for the exercise of our most cherished faculties, a qualification is *necessary*; and this qualification appears to us in the form of that which we call evil. In like manner, "Light" would be a wearisome monotony; a nameless thing without beauty or parts, were it not that its modifications—which extend to darkness—reveal all its exquisite properties, and make it a thing of comparison and gradation, potential in its adaptation to the conditions of our existence.

The most striking illustration of the necessity of modifications of good, presents itself in the sensation of feeling, which embraces all gradations, from the most pleasurable ex-

periences to the extreme of pain. It accompanies all physical action, and is the means of countless enjoyments until it assumes the form of pain; but under that form it is a necessity of existence; for without its warnings, life would quickly disappear from the face of the earth. Pain is generally regarded as the greatest physical evil to which life is subject; but—were it not that generalities only are being here considered—arguments might be adduced to show that not only is it a necessity of life, but that it is a moral as well as a physical guide and guardian; and that good, either directly or indirectly, is one of the chief characteristics of all its details; for—without entering upon the vexed question of free-will as opposed to compulsory law—it is clear that in the majority of instances, suffering may be traced to some previous infringement of natural law; in other instances to unconscious self-infliction; while those which cannot be immediately accounted for—a small and ever-decreasing minority—furnish matter for investigation, in which there is a certainty of the existence of a possible solution: and while provision is made of sovereign antidotes in many cases—and probably in all if we did but know them—

a limit is placed to physical suffering, by the lapse into unconsciousness ; which is testimony to the presence and potency of good, in that which is too commonly accepted as an active principle of evil.

Again, the moral and physical elements in our nature are so closely allied that it is permissible to draw moral deductions from physical facts. The attainments of science assure us of convertible properties in elements ; such as heat into force, and force into heat ; that attraction and repulsion exist harmoniously together ; that cold is indefinable, except as absence of heat ; that of the two gases which are the component parts of water—the destroyer of fire—one is highly inflammable, while the other is the chief ingredient of fire ; that elements are indestructible, and the marvellous productions of nature the result of their various combinations ; and that universal harmony is dependent upon the combination of elements apparently antagonistic in their attributes. May it not be fairly inferred that laws which govern physical conditions, are also applicable to mental and moral phenomena, in the instance, when anything having a special signification, such as good or evil,

permeates physical, mental or moral phenomena both separately and collectively, and with similar results? for example, it is presumable that as light is one of the representatives of good, and darkness of evil, good may bear the same relative affinity to evil as light does to darkness. It may be objected that the analogy is figurative only; but this is met by the fact that there is sufficient actuality in it, not only to render it admirably adapted as a figure for general acceptance; but that light and good have much in them which is in reality common to both, and this also applies to darkness and evil. It then remains, that if we establish the relation of light to darkness we arrive at an approximate estimation of the relative position of good to evil, at least so far as they are analogous to light and darkness.

In pursuance of this, we find that light is a material substance, its volume is measurable, its qualities are apparent, and its composition is subject to analysis; while darkness possesses no physical embodiment; it is even incapable of definition, in the abstract, and is a mere figure of speech denoting the

absence of light. The same analysis applies to heat and cold. And thus we see, that the two greatest life-giving, life-ruling, and life-sustaining agents—in fact the only known ones, if traced through their indirect, as well as their direct action—possess no *active* counteracting opposite, their attenuation by diffusion, or their conversion into latent forms—which are ever re-convertible and ever constant quantities—being inherent properties independent of darkness and cold, which are merely nomenclatures for passive voids, which are utterly or partially filled by the greater or less diffusion of light and heat. It is even conceivable that there may be sufficient light and heat in the universe—latent or otherwise—to exterminate darkness and cold altogether, even as ideas. Therefore, considering the close connection between light and good, and darkness and evil; and also that the same laws most probably govern physical and moral phenomena thus connected; we arrive at fair grounds for the inference that evil is only definable, as *absence* of good.

Moreover we find, that the action of natural law upon inanimate matter, is constant

in its conditions and perfect in its working and effects, and so certain is this, that it is accepted as an axiom, we may therefore conclude that any apparent aberrations of result exist only in our incompetency to recognize some special intention of law. Such apparent irregularities, however—even if they were proved to be more than ideal—are so few, and so unnoticeable in their effect upon universal harmony, that they in no way interfere with the fact that nothing but good emanates from the above law. If then by the evidence of experience, and in the absence of proof to the contrary, we can recognize nothing but good in the action of law upon inanimate matter, the obvious conclusion is, that the absence of good is apparent only in the aberrations of our mental and moral faculties; and from this we may infer, that evil is not a law in itself, but a necessity of the imperfection which is a necessity of progression: a necessary sphere of action for the development of good. And in like manner as an infinity of space affords endless scope for the advancement of the operations of physical law; so does an eternity of time afford opportunity for a mental and moral progression

to which no limit is assigned, excepting only a perfection which would embrace omnipotence; for it is competent for us to conceive a steady advancement through an eternity of time, without the attainment of an absolute perfection, such an attainment being not only a logical impossibility, but embracing a vastness which it is utterly beyond the power of imagination to conceive.

We are justly impressed with the immensity of the universe when a distance is revealed to us, which, light—travelling at the rate of one hundred and ninety thousand miles a second—takes thousands of years to traverse; but multiply that space by all the powers of arithmetic, and still it is smaller in its relation to infinity, than a grain of sand is to any product that calculation can arrive at. And such is the relative proportion of all that we can imagine of good, to an ultimate perfection.

Finally, it is clear that we unconsciously admit the power and preponderance of good as applied to our present condition, by the tenacity with which we cling to life: and if we were to closely analyze the general grievances of life, the vain struggles, the illusory

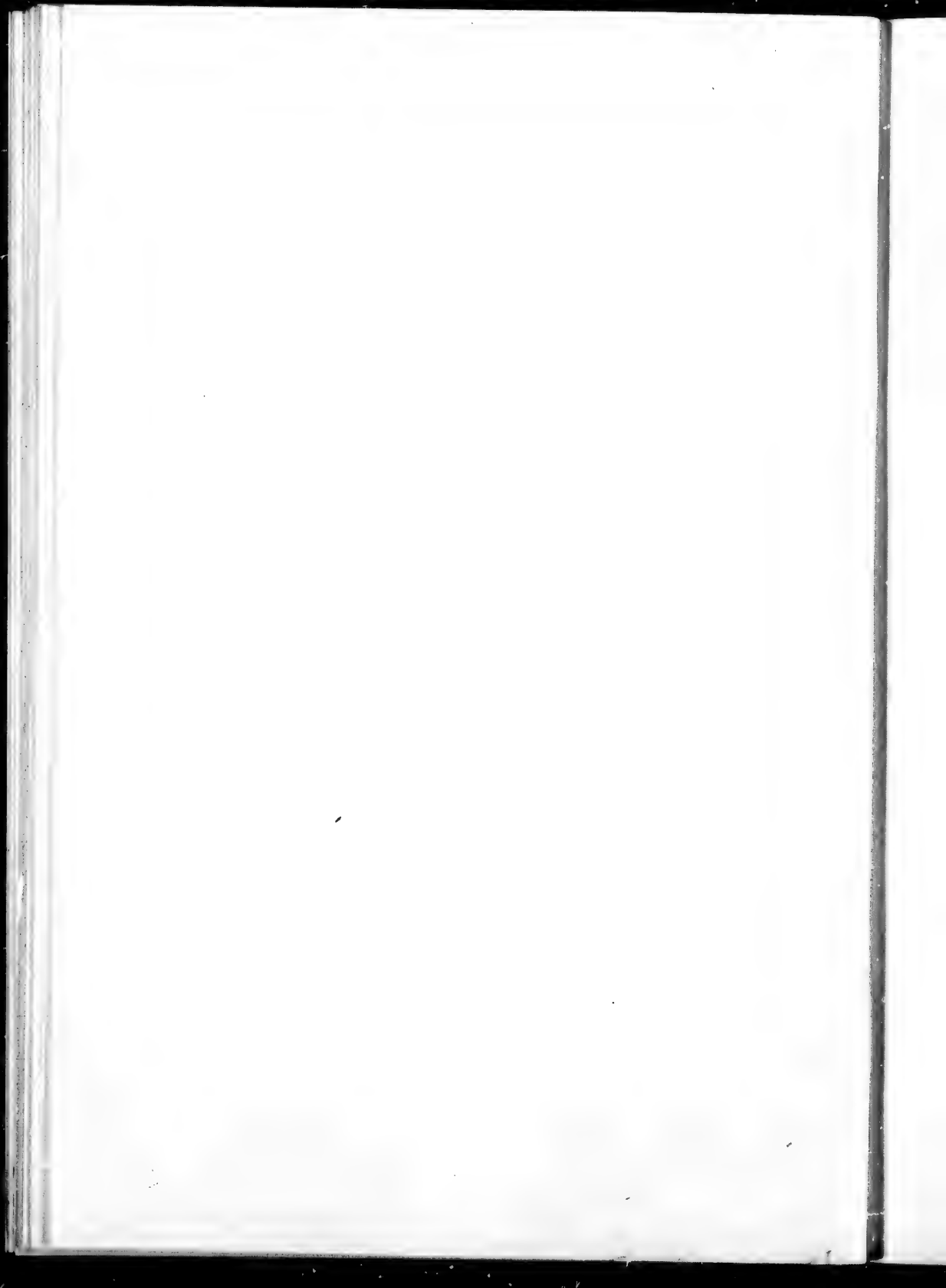
fears, and the disappointed hopes, we should probably find them to be mostly of our own creation.

Of future conditions of existence we know nothing; but our present experiences justify us in taking on trust the wisest provision for it, and it is only reasonable to suppose—knowing the immutability of law—that, that condition will be primarily—God forbid that it be eternally—regulated by our mental and moral attainments, or defalcations in this life. At present reason combines with all that is best in our nature, to urge upon us a faithful and submissive recognition of the wisdom and goodness of the stupendous power which has implanted in us a knowledge of the existence of good and evil, has added to it a discriminating reason, and has supplied us with progressive faculties, the proper cultivation of which leads us to

“Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
“Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”



SUBTLE
INFLUENCES.





Subtle Influences.

THE above title is one of such vast comprehensiveness, that only a summary view of its leading features can be taken in the following short essay: for every action of life is controlled by influences, many of which are apparent, many are known but imperfectly understood, and there is doubtless much to lead to the supposition, that there are many of which nothing whatever is known. The history of the past teems with false ideas of their nature, leading to a vast amount of credulity and superstition, which it has been within the province of science gradually to dispel. Astronomy has

suppressed Astrology; Geology has revealed the secret of the process by which the earth has attained its present condition, and has thereby corrected errors arising out of false theories respecting it; Chemistry has unmasked many delusions; Botany—in defining the nature and utility of herbs—has divested them of illusory qualities; the analysis of facts has placed belief in witchcraft, and in the efficacy of charms, even beneath contemptuous pity; while the sciences of optics, and acoustics have proved that there are many conditions under which our physical senses are not finally trustworthy, when unaided by knowledge and reason. And if we are still utterly in the dark with reference to the primary connection between mental, spiritual, and physical phenomena, yet a sufficient advance has been made in the knowledge of secondary causes, to lead to the conviction, that there is nothing fortuitous in natural law; and that there exist sure grounds for a basis upon which all that is occult in natural phenomena could be brought to light.

But although physical science has ceased to be affected by any idea of the super-

natural; and has so largely contributed in clearing away much, in which false theories, and heated imaginations, combined with ignorance, have led the world astray; yet it is out of its province to do more than expose the fallacies which interweave themselves with the facts of its own especial department. The solution of that which is actual in the spiritual domain, does not pertain to its functions, and although the philosophy of all ages, up to the present time, has been wandering in a vast labyrinth, making fruitless efforts to analyze the mental and spiritual influences which rule the power of action, their connection with the material is still a mystery, beyond the fact that they are inseparable in our conformation. It is within the limits of possibility, that further light may be brought to bear upon it; but the probability, amounting almost to a certainty, is, that the mental and spiritual parts of our nature form an intermediate link with a first cause; and in that case, any definition of the principles of their action is utterly unattainable. It is here that we step out of the realms of science and philosophy, into that

of theology: and if we look back upon past experience of the way in which science has rectified theological error; and theology has set limits to scientific research, and baffled the too inquisitive aspirations of philosophy, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that there is a clear line of demarcation separating their respective principles, which offers no impediment to a thorough permeation of their influences. We may be assured that there cannot be other than perfect harmony between *true* science, *true* theology, and *true* philosophy, by their mutual detection of error—that is to say—by the detection of that which may be erroneously advanced, relative to any one of them, through its inconsistency with any true principle of either of the others.

The above is a short synopsis of the relation to each other, of the influences which are the basis of the reason which, in man, regulates, the action of those instincts, passions, and attributes, which he shares in common with the whole animal creation. It would be a task, both endless and hopeless, to endeavour to trace this action through its varied, numerous, and intricate combina-

tions. It is sufficient for the present purpose, to bear in mind—without especially particularising or refining—that law and order, cause and effect, are certain in their conclusions in each and every of their conditions. Nature has provided matter; has established unalterable laws which govern it; and has endowed man with reason to enable him, by the discovery of those laws, to apply physical phenomena to his own uses. It has furnished him with capacity to search for the moral and intellectual verities of nature; the true and final object of his existence; and has invested him with a conscience which has a tendency to cause him to regulate his thought and action in conformity with the verities which his understanding may have realized: but these attributes—although possessed of an accumulative power of progression—meet with strangely perplexing influences in the course of their action.

It is evident that the higher the object of attainment, the more numerous and intricate are the influences which surround it. For instance,—the unreasoning portion of the animal creation, is sufficiently guided by

instinct, and natural desire, to the fulfillment of all its requirements; and the characteristics of species are constant in their nature, and perfectly adapted to meet all their necessities: but man's chief attribute is reason, which leads him to the consideration of matters of far greater significance than those which relate exclusively to his physical well-being, and yet, how labored, and how attendant with difficulties is its progress towards the solution of the mysteries in which its efforts are engaged; and how confusing are its subtleties: for however appropriate its qualifications may be for advancement towards the ends it aspires to,—and they cannot be otherwise than appropriate, or they would not exist,—yet nothing in the visible creation is influenced by a greater number of apparent contrarieties; or is liable to a greater amount of error. Its conclusions, with regard to physical science, are certainly of a determinate character; for there it calls all the physical senses to its aid, and its results are capable of a simply demonstrable proof. On matters intellectual its conclusions are less absolute, as the phenomena of mind and

thought are less capable of definition: but when it ascends into spiritual regions it wanders about, helplessly seeking a fact for a premiss, without which it is powerless. During its search it encounters theory upon theory, raised by its own endeavours and refuted with its own weapons; and is eventually constrained into the admission of the necessity of a first cause, infinitely beyond the range of its capacity to fathom; and which compels it to accept a theology as the only basis for its conclusions on spiritual matters. Reason is essentially human; it is not a necessity of law, which is fixed and in no way alterable or influenced by it, either directly or indirectly; it is subject to facts over which it has no control; it is the sole medium between law and the understanding, and the sole expositor of the influence of law, from which all minor influences radiate.

Now it may be laid down as an axiom, that law is perfect, both in comprehension and in action; it embraces everything conceivable, even to the consequences attendant upon its infraction: hence the question naturally arises, if law is absolutely perfect, whence come irregularities, falseness, and inconsisten-

cies? The answer may possibly be found in the perverted action of the rational faculty, which is exclusively human. It is only in matters which are subject to human influences that we find untruth resulting in evil and discord. Therefore it follows, that law being perfect, and reason being its only interpreter to the understanding, untruth must be consequent upon influences which lead reason away from its legitimate functions to wrong conclusions. Here again a question arises. If perfect law embraces all things, is not reason included? Undoubtedly it must be, but beyond this point the question is involved in a complication of influences, which lead to higher considerations than unaided intellect has hitherto been able to grasp. The laws which govern the mind and the intellect have not yet been defined, nor even known, beyond a recognition of their remote effects: probably they are closely connected with spiritual law, concerning which, in a scientific point of view, we are in still greater ignorance. One thing, however, reason has revealed to us, which leads to a clearer perception of the necessity of existing conditions; and also that truth must lie

at the bottom of them, notwithstanding apparent anomalies, viz.: that constant and steady progression is a law of nature, which is physically, mentally and intellectually demonstrable. Gradually and by slow degrees, does reason cause truth to emerge from obscurity; but it has to educate and drill itself up to the increasing requirements of its office; to control and restrict its erratic wanderings; and to free itself from the vast tangle of influences which pervert it from its true course. Little by little are discrepancies and irregularities cleared away by those who have devoted their talent and energy to discriminations between true reason and its vagaries. Men in advance of the age in which they lived—of which the present century furnishes an illustrious list—who, having established some point of truth, which has effected an advance in training the rudiments of knowledge towards fruition, have thereby erected a finger-post, pointing the way to further advancement: and it needs only a simple confidence in the stability of nature to predict that eventually the perfection of law will be thoroughly vindicated; and its perfect agreement with

the conditions of our existence made plainly manifest.

It is evident that the influences which primarily and most immediately affect humanity are physical: and it is noticeable that those which govern the earliest forms of progress, are strongest in their action and the most imperative in their demands. The necessity of food and shelter supersedes everything in its requirements. Next in order, but not quite so pressingly imperative, are the influences which regulate sensuous gratifications; and by which sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell are led up to the earliest stage of rude art. The requirements of art lead to the development of science, which is the first step from the physical to the intellectual. We may recognize in all this the power of law, which enforces immediate action where it is absolutely necessary; leaving little or nothing of option to reason and intellect; and in proportion with the advance of reason towards higher considerations, do we find, that the influences which govern it, increase vastly in number, and are more intricate in their action, but less *immediately* peremptory; thus affording it a

wider field for its conclusions, although the determinate conclusions of law are as absolute and as unalterable as ever. The whole process may be traced, in the present day, through its various stages, from the poor acquirements of the lowest savage, to the cultured talent of the intellectual scientist. Thus, in the order of progression, the history of the present, represents the successive histories of past ages: and it is a matter for curious enquiry to discover what depressing influences, or what absence of exalting influences, have kept tribes in a state of primitive barbarism, and some nations only a step removed from it; while among others, reason and intellect seem to have been used only to forward a debasement which unreasoning animals never descend to, and of which they are incapable; and all this simultaneous with the advancement which has so largely made the physical subservient to the intellectual, and is constantly and restlessly aspiring to still higher achievements. The inference to be drawn from these facts is, that some high ruling influence has obtained in the one instance, which has not extended to the other; and as all nature is abhorrent

of the idea of the prevalence of wrong over right, we may seek the cause of a continuance of a savage condition, in the *absence* of some principle inciting to advancement rather than in the *presence* of a retrograde principle which successfully opposes it; and it is necessary that it be of a high order, and possessed of attributes which must not only repel error, but must also lead to truth; and truth is advancement.

We have not far to seek. Reason guides us almost instantly to that which fulfills all the requisite conditions, and experience confirms that which reason directs us to. We find that in absolute barbarism there is no recognition of anything resembling a true moral law, that in semi-barbarism there is an imperfect recognition of it, and a corresponding indifference in complying with it, and that in high civilization there is not only a recognition of it, but it is accepted as a guide to action, and when we analyze the condition of nations, peoples, classes or communities existing in any of the intermediate stages, we find that either their general prosperity, their intellectual progress, their physical triumphs, their social relations,

or their domestic comfort go hand in hand with whatever may be specialities of their moral culture. The conclusion is obvious. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the prime mover of advancing civilization, is the intellectual element, and that the moral is subservient to it. The grounds upon which this argument is based are, that moral law is stationary, that it is fully defined, and that nothing has been added to it for ages, but that the intellectual principle is progressive and therefore superior. Now these grounds are excellent for arriving at a directly contrary conclusion. The error in the above arises from a confusion of cause and effect. It is granted that moral law is stationary, but are its effects stationary? and has any nation, any community, any individual ever fulfilled it to the letter? Its known stability is proof rather of its perfection; and although none have attained to its full observance, yet, none are bold enough or foolish enough, to question its validity. And although moral law is stationary, its comprehensiveness is illimitable; it is applicable to every action of life, and to every thought of the mind; and it is necessarily

stationary because it requires nothing additional to fulfil all its conditions. And here it may be remarked, that the word "stationary" has been borrowed from "Buckle's History of Civilization," because it is there used to illustrate the opposite view, (see Vol. 1, Chap. 4) but it is in no way applicable by way of particularizing any special law, for all law is stationary; but all law is not *known*. Now the laws which govern the intellect must also undoubtedly be stationary, but they are unknown; it is only in their effects that we recognize advancement. And laws which are clearly defined, which are decisive, and which are proved by results, must be more immediately potent in their action than those which are unknown, and the construing of which is consequently liable to error.

In order to further determine whether morality or intellect is of the greater fundamental necessity, it is desirable to be fully persuaded as to what progression consists in. If it consists in man's adaptation of physical phenomena to his requirements; the advance of science and refined art; and the

accumulation of all that constitutes wealth and luxury; then progression is the result chiefly of intellect. But if it consists in the subjugation of the passions; the cultivation of the amenities of social intercourse; the freedom of thought, and of action, consequent upon mutual trust and forbearance; regard for the preservation of life; the integrity of social and domestic ties; and the general rectitude of conduct arising from a conformity with the requirements of established laws; then morality rules over intellectuality, as a necessity of, or as a *cause* of progress, and is not—as it has been advanced in the counter-argument—an *effect* of the intellect. And this may be proved by the history of the past as well as by present experience.

The nations of Greece and Rome rose to the highest intellectual culture ever attained, where morality was almost absent. Their philosophy was of a deep and searching nature; their oratory is still held in high estimation in our schools; their poetry occupies a conspicuous place in our libraries; their sculpture has never been equalled by modern art; their architecture was chaste,

elegant and solid, and even now furnishes rules to which we conform; their parade of pomp and their refinement in luxury have never been surpassed; but where is their progression? Vanished! because it had not the stability which morality ensures. With them slavery was a cherished institution; revenge and suicide were regarded as virtues; cruelty was a pleasant diversion, and human life was sacrificed for mere amusement; immorality, worse than bestial, was praised by poets, practised by Emperors, and generally encouraged. The one great redeeming point, in which nearly all their morality was concentrated, was the universal submission of private considerations to the public welfare. So long as this was maintained it secured its object, and their countries flourished; but when enervating luxury and vice produced their attendant selfishness, then did the national pre-eminence collapse with the withdrawal of the one moral virtue which supported it.

In the present day, it is evident that national progress is proportionate to the extent in which national law is regulated by moral law; taking also into consideration the scale of the integrity of its judicial administration,

and the efficiency of the measures adopted for its enforcement. It would be tedious to illustrate this in detail; but if a finger is placed, hap-hazard, on a map of the world, it will surely point to a country, the general condition of which will verify the statement.

In the results of physical, intellectual and moral influences, we recognize something more or less definable, which may be used as a basis for inductive reasoning to arrive at secondary causes; but in ascending to spiritual enquiries, reason finds nothing sufficiently tangible, nothing sufficiently definable for a starting point; therefore it cannot in this—as in other matters—act as a guide to the understanding, further than assuring it that there must be an intention in the extremely subtle and perfectly immaterial influences which are classified as spiritual. Nevertheless, reason is competent to exercise a strong check upon error respecting them, by submitting it to the test of comparison with well proved scientific and other facts, although it is unable to define their positive determination. There is nothing, however, to counteract the supposition that they must be the direct emanations of a great, final and

inexplicable cause; whether regarded as a probability of rational and intellectual judgment, or as a necessity arising out of their incompetence to arrive at any other conclusion. Hence the understanding is constrained to accept in Theology, a solution of much that is otherwise incomprehensible.

But yet, in this highest and most important of all considerations, which contains the great problems of our existence and of our destiny; and the conception of which, in proportion to its truth, leads to the noblest aspirations, and also to the enjoyment and usefulness of life, as well as to a calm confidence regarding inevitable death, through faith in the unerring truth, wisdom, and beneficence of the immeasurably great presiding Deity, who, demonstrably, works no evil: yet, in this supreme end of all thoughtfulness, to which everything physical, everything rational, everything scientific, everything intellectual, and everything moral, not only points, but terminates in, what lamentable results occur from discrepancies in the conceptions of the details of its working. All the worst passions of humanity are aroused, and all the fierceness of fanaticism is engaged,

in the support of some utterly unreasonable and worthless dogma; or the absolute necessity of some trivial form of ritual. Every system of Theology abounds in instances: one is sufficient to illustrate it. The high caste Brahmin refuses to eat the food over which the shadow of a Christian has passed. The Parsee fears to desecrate his God by the consumption of a pipe of tobacco. The Chinaman burns camel's dung before his Joss. The Mohammedan trusts to fate in preference to his own exertions. And still more astounding is the fact, that men educated in the highest schools of learning, and trained to be the expositors of the highest of Theologies, profess to be ready to suffer martyrdom in support of the essential efficacy of a lighted candle; the cut or colour of some fantastic piece of drapery; or the position in which they stand at a table. And these men declaim against the noble efforts of scientific research, and with still less consistency, condemn the African who sticks a feather in the tail of his fetich to propitiate its good offices. Such instances as these—if it were not for the world-wide experience of the intensity of insensate fanaticism, which

utterly disregards that which comes within the province of reason to make apparent—could only be ascribed, either to driveling idiocy, or to the assumption of a mask for designing roguery.

Thus we see that the higher the form of influence, and the higher the bearing of its consequences, the greater are the intricacies of its working, and also the difficulties and misapprehensions consequent upon it. And, on the other hand, that the earliest stages of advancement are more directly enforced by immediate necessity. For, as a prime necessity in the attainment of physical knowledge is the adaptation of the physical senses to its acquirement; so is the observance of the fixed and peremptory laws of morality, the first necessity in the maintenance of an advanced civilization, and consequently of a high mental and intellectual progression. In this we may recognize a wonderfully wise provision for the fulfillment of a grand intention. First, in the establishment of true and unalterable premises upon which advancement is based; and again, in the increasing difficulties attending each forward step, involving the employment of higher faculties, which—gaining in develop-

ment and strength by being exercised—constantly increase in ability to elucidate loftier forms of truth. When the infant is learning to walk, it has no ulterior notion respecting it; the sole object is to be able to walk; but when it has attained thorough proficiency in the action, it regards it only as a means for the accomplishment of other purposes. These purposes—at first puerile in their intention—are in like manner succeeded by others of greater importance, which eventually develop into the full physical and intellectual capacity of manhood. The progress of the individual is a fair type of the progress of the race; and we may arrive at an approximate estimation of its present comparative stage of development, by a consideration of the influences which govern present action. There is little doubt that the action of a very large majority of mankind is governed by one or other of the following considerations. The accumulation of wealth; desire for personal pre-eminence; and the attainment of power, of influence, and of patronage. These, if considered as an end are worthless; they convey nothing to the understanding; they add nothing to progression; and again, considered as an end, are

simply a development of the lowest passions ; but if considered as the means to an end, they are of the utmost importance ; for they can be made instrumental in forwarding the highest purposes, in a way which is too apparent to be specified here. And when we look upon the past long duration of these considerations, in which they have been regarded as the chief end and purpose of life, and notice that they are only now, and only partially, beginning to be considered as means for the advancement of higher purposes, we may compare the present progress of mankind to that stage of youth which is just beginning to emerge from puerility. And the small, select minority of mankind, which has retained, improved upon, and added to the experience of past ages ; and which includes the hard-working, patient, and thoughtful scientists, the acute logicians and close reasoners, the men who illustrate high thought by deeply studied art, and the literary scholars who perpetuate and diffuse the knowledge acquired ; these may be likened to the first signs of intellectual manhood ; the aspirations of sanguine youth, glouring the future with a golden tint.

If the analogy holds good so far, we may presume that it will continue; and as we have experience of the full course of the individual, but not any of that of the race, beyond its youth, it is competent for us to anticipate the future by comparison. Therefore, in pursuing the analogy on these conditions, it may be observed, that in manhood the bright anticipations of youth are seldom realized; and even if possession of all that was considered desirable is obtained, it does not result in the satisfaction and contentment which were too sanguinely looked forward to. It then becomes apparent that there is a higher form of progressiveness, without which, life loses its chief attractions, and the prospect of death elicits nothing but a timorous shudder at the abrupt, mournful, and useless conclusion in which all the hopes, desires, and the struggles of life terminate. So, with the human race, we may anticipate that all which is noble in science and intellect, now slowly beginning to cast its healthful influence over the habitable world, is not the end of final attainment; but a necessary preparation for the universal reception of considerations of far higher moment. And when the most

powerful of all influences, the spiritual emanations of a pure Theology, shall have become universally felt and acknowledged; when the motives and actions of each and every unit of the human race are strictly ruled by the spirit of truth; then—and not until then—will all apparent discordancies be reconciled, and the destiny of humanity await its fulfillment. And notwithstanding the distantly perspective view of such a consummation; the sneers of capacious cynics; the present busy occupations of life, so foreign to any considerations of the kind, and which are so all-absorbing, and are pursued with such almost frantic eagerness, that there is little time for any thought of the possibility that they may be ultimately regarded as puerilities consequent upon the age; and notwithstanding all the improbabilities with which the question may be invested; yet all the analogies in nature point to the conclusion, that there cannot be one thing standing alone among so many perfect adaptations, which is useless, purposeless, and ending in confusion and discord; but that at some more or less remote period of time, order will arise out of apparent irregularity; truth will prevail over all that is false; and

it will become clearly manifest, that all the influences by which we are controlled—be they physical, moral, intellectual, or spiritual—have been working harmoniously towards the accomplishment of the one purpose for which they were all designed. And concerning the ultimate destiny of mankind, all this will give much more than an assurance of hope; it will establish perfect confidence in the wisdom, and perfect trust in the will of the inconceivably great and wonderful source from which all influences emanate.



PATRIOTISM.



Patriotism.

THERE are few persons who do not carry with them through life a cherished recollection of the attachments of their childhood and youth. The tender love of a parent; the genial and loving companionship of a sister, or a brother; the events connected therewith, which are associated with localities; each bears its part in the absorbing influence attached to the word "home." As life advances, the sympathies thus created are extended, but in a milder form, to the customs, the institutions, and the interests of nationality; and home may be called the foster-mother of patriotism; for it is chiefly by the

influences of home, that its life is nourished, and its growth developed. And although this is a very close connection, yet—like that of a foster-mother to her nurseling—there is no necessary tie of consanguinity; for a special locality, which is the least necessary element of home, represents the very existence and soul of patriotism. And while he who shrinks from any self-sacrifice, which is necessary to the well-being of those dependent upon him for support and protection, in all their forms, is either a dastard, or something very much worse, the voluntary severance of all personal interests from the ties of nationality, by changing their locality, is merely a matter of taste, or of convenience, which in no measure approaches the dereliction of a sacred duty.

However strong the ties of nationality may be,—embracing as they do, language, habits, conventionalities, and the general associations which have such a strong influence over tastes, thought and action,—yet the duties they involve are not necessarily attached either to nationality or to patriotism, beyond that which circumstance requires, that is to say,—although it is the duty of

everyone to add his quota of service to the general well-being in which he participates, yet patriotism is only a duty when subject to certain conditions, which are not only not unalterable, but may possibly become at some future period altogether obsolete: neither is it a duty involving action in those who by their own will, free themselves from the conditions which make it one.

However Utopian the conclusions arrived at upon the following grounds may appear; yet possibly they may be found worthy of some consideration, if merely as the result of a speculation upon the moulding of the future by the action of the present. In considering the propositions which lead to them, it is necessary to divest the mind of all the emotional sentiment connected with the subject, which has been so readily accepted in all ages, and so largely encouraged by Poets, Painters, and Historians, and bring to bear upon them a judgment untrammelled by conventionalities, which—engendered by circumstance, and fostered by popular sensation—have acquired an undue significance.

Without questioning the necessity—under the existing form of nationalities—of what may be called patriotism in the abstract, in contradistinction to sentimental and sensational patriotism, but at the same time regarding it in its general significance, there is much to be considered relative to the conditions which make it a necessity. It must be borne in mind that it is inseparable from nationality, and is therefore committed to an adhesion to all the domestic, social, and foreign relations of a national policy; and these relations consist, firstly, of laws which regulate the internal economy of the state, and spread their influence over religion, morality, order, commerce, and almost every occupation and action of life. Should there be any law opposed to the interests, or the opinions of individuals, they can use whatever influence they possess to get it changed or annulled; but it is their duty not only to submit to, but to support it, so long as it remains law and they retain their nationality. The relations of foreign policy embrace the framing of international law; the agreements which refer to the manner in which respective rights and in-

terests are acknowledged, and to be supported; and the disagreements which result in war: and the patriotism which supports the action of the state, is plainly a necessary consequent upon nationality.

There is little to be said about the laws which regulate domestic and social matters. There is always an endeavour to make them as well adapted to the purposes for which they are intended, as separate interests admit of; and there is little to oppose patriotism in exerting its legitimate functions in supporting and in endeavouring to improve them. It is when the interests of nations are supposed to clash, that the tremendous evils arise which agitate the world, and occasionally turn prosperity and progress into adversity and retrogression. It is when questions of territory, of honor, of commercial interests, or of policy, cannot be satisfactorily adjusted, that the enthusiasm of a popular patriotism outruns calm judgment and a wise discretion, and hurries on declarations of war; and there is no gainsaying the fact that however justified it may be on one side—and it cannot be justified on both—war is an evil; and also,

that it is supported by a patriotism, which—however necessary or however misplaced it may be—is the result of the exigencies of nationality. It is when certain interests are supposed to be involved, that tariffs are imposed upon foreign produce, and retaliatory tariffs are considered necessary; and this is an evil, for which, again, the present condition of nationalities is responsible.

The above trite platitudes will be further shortly considered, simply as a premiss to the propositions which will be submitted. The evils of war embrace, firstly, fully one-half of the national expenditure of energy, in the support of costly armaments; also the withdrawal from industrial pursuits of a large proportion of those who are best adapted for them, by their youth and physique; and again, the entire devotion of the energies of those thus withdrawn from progression, to the destruction of the advancement achieved by others; there is also the loss in actual warfare of those upon whom the hopes, and in many instances, the necessary requirements of families depend. Much more has frequently been said about the evils of war, but it suffices to repeat the above. The question

of its necessity does not concern us here, further than that there must be something more than false about a system which causes the necessity of an unmitigated evil.

With reference to free trade; the question as to its being a desirable national policy, has often been well and ably discussed in all its bearings: but whether it be so, or otherwise, is not a matter for present consideration, which is confined to the enquiry whether any restrictions imposed upon it are not—when considered generally—followed by a large preponderance of evil results. The wealth of a people consists in their labour, and the intelligent application of it; any superfluity of labour and intelligence over and above that which is necessary to meet immediate requirements, is stored up in the various kinds of riches which represent them, and which are always interchangeable; hence it seems to be a self-evident fact, that the unrestricted interchange of those things which one country produces, and another requires, must be mutually beneficial. But here national requirements interpose their influence; and a public revenue must be raised in order to meet an expenditure, the greater

part of which is devoted to carrying out a foreign policy; and for this purpose a tax is levied upon imports; and this entails not only an increased scarcity in some parts of the world, of those necessities of life, of which there is a superfluity in other parts; but it entails restrictions upon commerce, upon industries, and upon foreign communication, both social and commercial, each of which is followed by its train of evils.

It is a noticeable fact that the amount of revenue required for the purpose of effectively carrying on all the home requirements of a government, is a trifle in comparison with that which has to be raised for the purposes of foreign policy; for the maintenance of armaments; and to meet the interest due upon debts contracted solely to meet an expenditure incurred by previous wars. This applies to all nations, so the evil is a general one, and it entails upon after generations an immense expenditure of that energy which might otherwise be devoted to an increase of production, and to the furtherance of the material and intellectual attainments of a higher refinement, and of everything which represents improvement and progression

in whatever is desirable: and this vast expenditure of energy, of labour, and of intelligence, will be increased, rather than diminished, so long as the enthusiasm of a popular patriotism is directed towards the furtherance of the real, or supposed interests of a special locality, and of the people who inhabit it, to the detriment of the general welfare of mankind.

The above is an endeavour to point the fact, that the greatest evils of those which it is in the power of mankind to avert, arise out of the apparent necessities of the past and present conditions of nationalities; showing that the patriotism which supports those conditions, is not a special virtue in itself, but an untrained emotion; the natural result of primitive circumstance, necessitating the social unions which formed the nucleus of states; an emotion restricted in its action by the very cause of its existence; yet capable of expansion into a virtue, by being trained to embrace considerations of far higher import than any of those which are confined to locality, or limited by the exactions of the conventionalities attendant upon race, and its associations.

The recognition of the true source of an evil, in the prelude to the first step taken in a right direction to suppress it; otherwise, constant contention with it results, at the best, only in its modification. With regard to the evils above referred to, it is a question which will presently be considered; whether there are not already some indications that such a step has been taken. But before doing so it is necessary to dwell for a short time upon the enormous difficulties to be overcome; for which the patriotism of the age, as well as that of preceding ages is in some measure responsible. A difficulty arises even in discussing them; for such is the force of patriotic feeling, that the utterance of anything prejudicial to the popular conception of it may appear to many, almost in the light of as acrimonious defamation. But, be that as it may, the object here is to discuss fact, without being prejudiced by sentiment.

It is here first premised that the evils which rank among the greatest of those which it is in the power of humanity to rectify, viz:—war; with all its attendant

waste, destruction, and miseries; and restrictions in commerce, which lead to want and destitution, and have a general tendency to obstruction; also, the exclusiveness which wraps itself up in its own limited experiences, and is impervious to any impression, beyond such as may be conveyed by the fixed ideas incidental to its own circumscribed field of action—are consequent upon the present conditions of nationalities. The influences which maintain these conditions, embrace the strongest ties which bind men together: they comprise, identity of language; a religion in common; submission to the same laws and form of Government; and a love,—the result of education and association,—of the same customs and pursuits, the same public and social forms, and the same public and private institutions. None of these are evils in themselves; on the contrary, the only objection that can be taken to them is, that they are not universally applicable, instead of being restricted by race and locality; for then our Utopia would be realized; the expression of nationality would convey no meaning, beyond that of mere locality; all other

distinctions which now characterize it would cease to exist; every incitement to war would be destroyed; commerce would be conducted on the principles of a community, instead of a diversity of interests; and the word "Patriotism" would become obsolete throughout the world.

The idea of a universal unity in language, religion, customs, laws, institutions, and all general interests, doubtless appears wild, extravagant, and impracticable, when we consider all that has to be done to attain it. The deeply rooted prejudices to be overcome, and new ideas to be instilled; languages to be assimilated; local governments to be remodelled, and made to accord with a form to be generally accepted; and all the multifarious discordancies of the world,—too numerous to catalogue, and apparently too deeply engrained to excite any hope of a possible adjustment,—to be made to agree. Notwithstanding all this, there will be an endeavour to prove that steps have already been taken, which show that there is a tendency to progression towards its accomplishment; and however indirect those steps may appear to be,

and however improbable it may be that they are taken, with a consciousness of that tendency, yet they suffice to constitute a premiss to an imaginable course of events, which may be based upon them; and which it is not altogether impossible that time may realize.

Accordancies already exist which may be called primary necessities; for instance, if we review the influences which support nationalities, we find that they are identical with those which would help to support a general unity, after it was once established; but when compared with the influences which the enormous advantages of such a unity would evoke, they would sink into insignificance along with the patriotism which is partial, unless they underwent the expansion of which they are capable, and thereby ceased to be exclusive. And if we review the impediments to unity, we find, both by history and experience, that discordancies, apparently as irreconcilable, have occasionally been made, by force of circumstances, to assimilate.

Neither the material, the mental, nor the moral forces of the world are ever at a

standstill; and there are many subtle influences constantly at work, settling disagreements, establishing reforms, and adjusting discrepancies, which—although they may appear at first sight, to bear only upon a special object—exercise an irresistible control over matters and events remote from each other, and with which they have no apparent connection: and it is more than probable that agencies, of which we have only a slight conception, are working by slow degrees, and by means apparently most distantly and faintly connected with an ultimate conclusion, towards the accomplishment of grand and important events. It is, however, only upon clearly perceptible and definite facts, that an imaginable possibility should be based; and a few such facts will be here considered relative to the tendency of their action towards the furtherance of a general unity of interests, the acknowledgment of a universal brotherhood, the suppression of invidious national distinctions, and consequently the extinction of war, of opposing interests in commerce, and therefore necessarily, of the utility of patriotism.

However slow a general progression may be in its earliest stages, it has an accumulative

power: and notwithstanding all that is said about impossibilities, it is beyond the power of human foresight to predict the height of its attainment. The earliest advances of civilization, and its accompaniments, are marked by ages and eras; then centuries show a progression superior to all that preceded them; and lastly, the united action of past times furnished the elements of a still higher form of progression, effected within a period marked by the existence of a generation: and it is this which we are about to consider as the element of future possibilities.

Of all the advancements effected during the eighty years of the present century,—which may be called the period of the existence of a generation—by far the most important in its action upon the future, as well as upon present times, is the largely increased spread of education, and the world-wide diffusion of knowledge and information. The various advantages accruing to this, are far too diversified, and far too numerous to be specified here. It is the root of progress, sending forth shoots in every direction, which have in many instances, reached a growth which ensures their vitality. Already have

we experienced the tendency of education to diminish the number and the importance of meretricious social prejudices, and class conventionalities, which support an exclusiveness, which must eventually be altogether regulated by the more benign influences of desert and excellence. In England this tendency has shown itself during the present age, in the admission of Jews to an equality in the rights of nationality and citizenship; in Catholic emancipation; in parliamentary reform; in the extension of the franchise; and in other effacements of false distinctions of minor significance. It is also observable in all countries where education and enlightenment have increased in quality and extent. The accomplishment of each of these was steadily and bitterly opposed by class prejudices; and in each instance a narrow-minded exclusiveness was crushed—as it always must be—by an ever-advancing enlightenment, which probably, will eventually furnish the means of giving to all classes an equal opportunity for the attainment of the intellectual acquirements which, without early education, are mastered only by exceptional genius, and under difficulties requiring no ordinary degree

of fortitude to surmount. A great help towards such a result, is the large amount of cheap literature of an improving tendency, which is now produced, and is accessible to all, through vastly improved postal regulations; and which is quietly, but steadily and surely working its way towards the extinction of that brute-like ignorance, prejudice, superstition, and stupidity, which have so long characterized large masses of mankind.

The advance of science has—during the present century—made huge strides, where heretofore the movement was slow, and in some instances imperceptible. Notably in Chemistry, Surgery, and Natural History. It has vastly improved Agriculture and Metallurgy; and it has introduced novelties, which have created a revolution in thought, in customs, and in necessities; witness the birth and advancement of Geology, of the application of Steam, of Electricity, and the wonders revealed by the Spectroscope. These are only a very small portion of the scientific achievements of the nineteenth century, yet they alone are sufficient to illustrate the accumulative power of progression in one of its branches.

Neither is mechanical advancement behind the age in producing the novel requirements which education and science impose upon it. The engineer who is empowered to carry out a grand idea, is quickly supplied with the requisite mechanical requirements, however vast, or however intricate they may be: and the introduction of machinery worked by steam, has not only diverted an enormous amount of manual labour and energy, into higher and wider channels of usefulness and intelligence, but has supplied numberless fresh resources for the future to utilize. The application of steam power to navigation has afforded largely increased facilities for international communication, and also of access to extreme parts of the world; and the effects of a widely extended social intercourse, are felt both morally and intellectually, as well as commercially. There are few influences that have a greater tendency to promote a good understanding between nations, and a levelling of their disparities, than a widely extended personal intercourse: by it, old prejudices are removed, ideas are interchanged, languages become gradually intermingled, and eventually there ensues an

identity of customs and institutions, which leads to the unity of races. As an instance of this we may take the race now known as Anglo-Saxon. Neither the ancient Briton, the Roman, the Dane, the Saxon, nor the Norman, would now recognize any of their own especial characteristics in their descendants; nor understand a single sentence of the language which they each contributed to form. The consolidation of proximate States, which has taken place in present times, in Germany, in Italy, and the confederation of British provinces, is in an early stage of development in distant parts. Japan is rapidly conforming to the rules of a higher civilization; China has been driven out of an absurd exclusiveness, by the entrance into its capital of British and French troops; and the States and tribes of India join in acknowledging a rule, against which they have found it useless to contend; while savage tribes, which are not capable of profiting by the introduction of civilization into their country, subside into nothingness, as in Australia, North America, and Tasmania.

On reviewing these features of progress, we find that they exercise no retarding

influence on each other; on the contrary, the advance of any one of them is an additional help to the furtherance of the rest; hence progression possesses an accumulative power, the details of which would supply matter for volumes. And if—while taking this into account—we look back a few centuries, and compare the means then furnished for improvement, with those which the present century provides for the future—presuming that progression advances in the same ratio—what a field of view opens before us.

It is with all reverence, and submission to the wisdom which conceals from us any certainty as to the future, that imagination opens a page of the history of the world, some few centuries hence. An anticipation which is permissible if it is limited to conclusions drawn from substantial facts; and if such conclusions are sanctioned by the constant and uniform action of past and present times tending progressively towards them. Viewing it in this light, we see the strenuous exertions now being made to educate and refine, gathering accumulative strength, through the taught becoming

teachers; and education—the motive power of progression—with all its attendant advantages, eventually becoming universal, and bringing in its train, as a natural consequence, a suppressive power over ignorance and vice, and substituting in their place intelligence and morality. We see its moral effects in social intercourse, softening asperities, curbing the display of violent passions, and training them to subjection. Its physical effects are manifest in a more healthy condition of the body, arising from the suppression of enervating vice; and as both good and evil propensities, as well as physical conditions, are transmitted by inheritance, each succeeding generation will have less evil to contend against, and greater power to subdue it; and the world at length becomes regulated by those leading principles of Christianity, which are now theoretically admitted, but practically ignored.

We see the great facilities for international communication, produced by the present age, vastly increased; fresh requirements producing fresh expedients, until the inhabitants of all parts of the world become familiarized; the consequence of which is that a popular language prevails; that the

training of infancy and youth, followed by the continued education of a widely extended experience, becomes universal; that by a general moral and intellectual advancement, religions become divested of fanaticism and superstition; and one great standard of theology and morality is everywhere accepted; that the customs and institutions of different localities commingle, and that which is good in either is retained, while that which is bad is rejected; and that different nations recognize in each other, the same first principles of a common humanity, which—in the exclusiveness of nationalities—had hitherto been trained to such widely differing results.

We turn over another page in the history of the future, which refers to a still further advanced period; and we see, that, the consolidation, first of communities into States, and then of States into nations—which we have already experienced—is extended to nationalities, through the instrumentality of the above mentioned attainments; and by the same process with which, in their partial development, they effected the union of communities and States. We see that war,

which the present age has made some effort to suppress, by the substitution of arbitration—is altogether abolished, being no longer considered even a necessary evil; that the word “glorious” has long since ceased to be attached to it; and that it is regarded simply as senseless folly, and barbarous brutality; even as the present generation is beginning to regard individual encounters by duel, which, previous to the last half century, were attended with marked distinction; and if the recipient of honor had run one or two adversaries through the heart, or sent a bullet through their brains, it was the glory of war on a small scale.

We also see that consequent upon the cessation of war, and of the enormous expenditure of wealth and energy it entailed, taxation is only a light matter; industries are not crippled; commerce is subject to no restrictions beyond the natural ones of supply and demand; plentiful supplies are dependent only upon a very reliable overruling Providence; and peace, security and contentment make the occupations of life enjoyable.

And lastly we see that with the extinction of nationalities, and their useless

rivalries, a popular patriotism has no longer an object on which to exercise its functions; even its name has lost its significance; but it is only dead in name; it has progressed with the times, and has expanded out of a restricted emotion into a positive virtue: and, as, in the present day, we are beginning to recognize the fact, that the interests of the individual are identical with the interests of the community, we may fairly infer that it is the first step towards a recognition of the fact, that the interests of all mankind are identical. And—again looking into the future—we see an advance, which tolerates no exclusiveness that would vainly attempt to forward the interests of one country at the expense of another; and that patriotism has developed into a grand, active, self-denying, universal charity, throwing broadcast over the whole world, and with no sparing hand, the inestimable benefits which it alone can confer.



MIRACLES.



Miracles.

THE word "Miracles" expresses all that is necessary for ordinary colloquial purposes; but when it represents matters under special consideration, it is desirable that there should be a close definition of its meaning. It can hardly be supposed that any action can extend beyond the bounds of an imaginable possibility, that is to say, it cannot involve contradictory results in itself; such as would be the enclosing of space by two straight lines, or any similar anomaly. Therefore the full meaning of the word may be expressed, as something contrary to our notions of the regular order of nature;

beyond our experience; and inexplicable by any known method of physical research.

Opinions concerning miracles are represented by the believer, the sceptic, and by him who utterly ignores them. The believer is impressed by religious conviction, and by faith in the accuracy of historical report; the sceptic wavers between the two; and the decided disbeliever bases his argument upon the attainments of science, the evidence of the senses, and the immutability of law. The believer recognizes their conceivable probability, which strengthens his faith on other grounds; the disbeliever relies chiefly upon reasoning by deduction, which he conceives leads to their impossibility. No argument which excludes all considerations not purely material will influence the former; while the latter will accept no conclusion which is not based upon his own premises. This then—in order to meet the views of the disbeliever—must be simply a logical disquisition; questions of faith and belief, of opinion and sentiment, must be excluded; and it will be confined, in the first part, to a consideration of possibility or impossibility; but the following premiss must be accepted as uncon-

ditionally absolute, viz: there exists a power—call it by what name you will—ceaselessly working with perfect accuracy, amidst an infinity of intensely complicated combinations; holding the Universe with all its details under perfect control; necessarily sentient; and utterly beyond our comprehension in extent.

It is presumed that the argument against the possibility of miracles includes nothing beyond the evidence of science, the evidence of the senses, and the evidence of immutable law. It remains to consider them in the order expressed.

The world owes more to men of science than to any other class of men; they unfold the mysteries of nature for the benefit of mankind, with fewer chances of worldly advantage than is their due; and it is not too much to say, that the arts of civilization, the refinements of life, the advantages of commerce, and the benefits arising from natural and philosophical research, are, in some measure, the result of their labours. It is these high considerations, and the constant addition made to them, which excite an undue estimate of the attainments of science relatively; more especially among those who

obtain their facts from others: for the old axiom still holds, that the greater our knowledge, the more we find there is to learn: and the well known remark of Sir Isaac Newton—whose name still stands unrivalled in the combination of astronomer, mathematician, scientist and philosopher—"I feel like a little child picking up pebbles on the seashore of truth"—is virtually appropriated by the leading scientists of the present day in the extreme caution with which they advance an opinion, or accept an apparent conclusion.

The highest attainments of science are nothing more than the discovery and application of existing facts, apparently as old, and probably older than the formation of the Universe; and unless it produces *positive* evidence that any proposition is refutable by established fact, it cannot declare it to be impossible. An appeal to its evidence relative to miracles, elicits the answer, that certain constant effects are invariably the result of certain conditions, and that the effects referred to have never come within its experience. The first part of the statement is an axiom; but the evidence of its experience is only *neg-*

ative evidence, and—when the extent of the known is compared with that of the unknown—of a low order. It is not on effects alone that the final point rests; it is chiefly on conditions and causes; and on these, scientific experience never reaches finality.

It has come within the province of science to detect and expose the numberless deceptions, which in all ages, have been palmed upon mankind as spiritual manifestations. In some instances by showing them to be the result of some trifling amount of human ingenuity, similar in character to the sleight-of-hand of the mountebank; and in other instances by proving their opposition to well established fact, and consequently their untruth; but it is as much at a loss to give valid reasons for the impossibility of resuscitating the dead, as it is to account for the germs of a forest tree existing in a minute seed; one is as equally accountable as the other; they both resolve themselves into a knowledge of the capabilities, and a control over the action, of elements. Probably if the production of the forest tree from the small seed were unfamiliar to us, it would appear to be the greater miracle

of the two. Considerations of this kind reduce the question—with regard to the bearing of science upon it—to one of experience; the incapacity of which, relative to a knowledge of final causes is obvious; for however large a field there may be for the study of effects, the process of inductive reasoning has never led beyond a knowledge of secondary causes. The primary workings of mind upon matter are unknown to us: and although we recognize the subserviency of matter to mind—even in the limited power with which we are endowed—in the hand obeying the will; yet, where the mental process begins and ends, and the physical action commences; or, by what means the one acts upon the other; or, how a mental process can by any means be converted into physical action, are inscrutable mysteries. It is thus apparent that as science can give no definition of a power which we ourselves possess, it is still less competent to ascribe any limit to the source from which it emanates, and of which it is a mere shadow or type.

However much we may be indebted to scientific research for constantly increasing

discoveries of immense importance to our general and immediate well-being, still it appears destined never to make the slightest advance towards elucidating the metaphysical mysteries of a single natural element. Even the elements themselves are presumably unknown, for they are being constantly added to, and those formerly considered as elements, recognized as compounds. Hence it is unreasonable to suppose that such a very imperfect, and restricted knowledge can presume to declare that no possible combinations can exist which could restore the dead to life; or instantaneously produce effects which ordinarily require time for their development. It is true that the pages of the great book of nature lie open before us, but our present comprehension of the mysteries therein contained, is somewhat similar to that of a child endeavoring to decipher a cuneiform inscription, while possessing only an imperfect knowledge of the rudiments of its own national language.

The evidence of the senses is not uncommonly considered irrefutable; but this is erroneous. It is more or less reliable, according to the training which the senses

have undergone. Probably no two men ever existed whose mental, moral and physical senses exactly coincided; even as, in a similar way, a distinctive personal expression characterizes each man among many hundreds of millions bearing the same features. The physical senses of the savage become highly developed by constant action, while his moral sense is almost eliminated by disuse. The mental sense of the accomplished scientist, or philosopher, is enlarged to an extent unattainable by the mere mechanical manipulator; while his physical senses may not be sufficiently trained to enable him to execute common mechanical requirements with any degree of precision. Even individually the senses convey opposite impressions. Those of a physical nature vary according to the state of the health, or the period of life, while in matters requiring mental consideration age frequently doubts, and occasionally rejects conclusions which appeared to youth absolutely certain. Although the senses are wonderfully adapted to the conditions of our existence, yet there is little intuitive perception of truth in their action, for as there can be but one truth concerning any one

point, it follows that all impressions, relative to that point, which differ, must with one exception, be erroneous; and it is not a necessary consequent that even one is correct; and not only do all individual experiences differ, in a greater or less degree, but different individuals frequently receive different impressions by the conveyance of identical facts through the same sense. If it were not so, truth would be impressed upon all men alike, and divergence of opinion would be impossible.

The physical senses are less liable to great aberrations than those of the mental and moral; but their functions are restricted to a specific material finality, ending where those of the latter commence; any testimony other than that which relates to present effects is outside their sphere of action; and as historical record of the experience of miracles is excluded from this part of the argument—the object of which is to refute the supposition of their impossibility solely on rationalistic premises—it must not be here considered. It is however, sufficiently clear, that without the aid of either history or tradition, the physical senses can neither

give evidence for, nor against anything which may or may not have occurred beyond the period of a lifetime; and their experience is the sole point upon which the objector can base the plea of unreasonableness, for if neither moral, emotional, theological nor historical considerations are admitted, there is nothing left but present experience for reason to take as a premiss: and if a premiss does not embrace the whole of a truth, the conclusions drawn from it must be incomplete; consequently the reasoning which arrives at a determinate conclusion on a transcendental matter, solely from the experience of senses which are definitely and closely restricted in the matters of time, space, action, and function, is not only incomplete, but from such a narrow premiss is liable to the gravest error. Moreover, if the positive phenomena, which are clearly recognised by every sense we possess, are inscrutable, surely those about which we have sufficient grounds to theorise, cannot be called impossible until proof is furnished that they are inconsistent with—not putative—but well-established law.

The laws of nature are immutable: effect follows cause without the slightest deviation,

and with such regularity and precision, that natural law and perfect truth may be almost regarded as convertible terms. A most convincing proof that utter and everabiding truthfulness is one of the sublime attributes of the All-supreme. This immutable truthfulness—although a sufficient guarantee that nothing embracing conclusions which refute each other can exist—offers no impediment to the supposition that anything imaginable may possibly exist, which does not involve a contradiction; and before anything can be called impossible, it must not only be proved to be inconsistent with all the functions of elements, but opposed to any possible effect of any of their possible combinations.

Perhaps the greatest recorded miracle is the restoration of the dead to life, and in discussing its claim to possibility, the premiss started from must be borne in mind, viz.: that there exists a sentient power, possessing a thorough knowledge of all existing elements; a thorough knowledge of the results attendant upon each and every of their possible combinations; and a thorough control over their action; and as



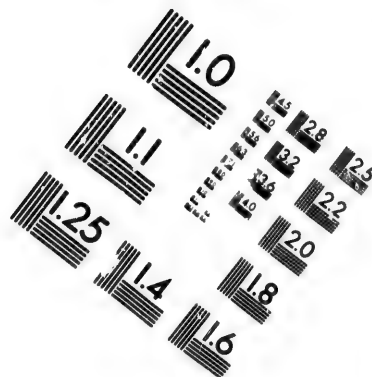
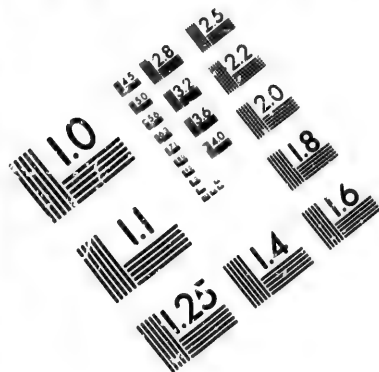
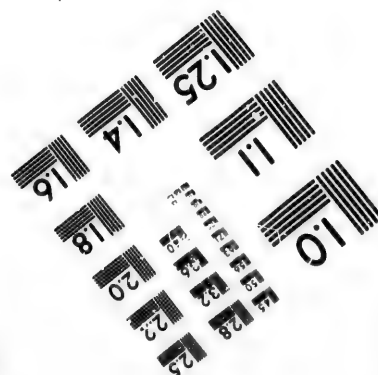
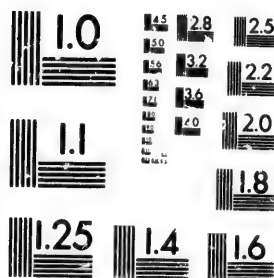


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we recognise this as the power which produced man, and endowed him with all his wondrous attributes, it is no stretch of imagination to suppose that it can restore and reanimate. But the freedom to exercise that power at discretion is disputed. There must have been active agency at some period and who shall say when and where it stopped? We see that even man himself, by the study of law, can renovate impaired functions, and can frequently protract the period of dissolution. The power which endowed him with a capacity for intervention—however restricted that capacity may be—can scarcely be debarred from the exercise of it. All nature proclaims progressive change; and its wonderful story is emphatically told by the formations and deposits which occur between the igneous rocks and the alluvial soil; and even if the fiat first went forth, that from primordial atoms, the marvellously intricate adaptations of nature were to be developed without further intervention, the phenomena which we call miracles, may nevertheless have formed part of the original intention. Our conceptions of the miraculous, or the

impossible are constantly undergoing modification. The moment a newly discovered wonderful fact is recognised, it is enrolled upon our list of natural phenomena, with the same quiet complacency and assurance with which we recognise the production of the forest tree from the small seed; but our notions of the regular order of nature are enlarged; negative testimony loses a point; and the miracle of yesterday becomes the commonly utilized fact of to-day. A picture printed by the rays of the sun; or a few minutes conversation between people thousands of miles apart, would have been miracles, and apparently opposed to natural law, during the infancy of men now living; and it frequently occurs that, that which is apparently indisputably true in one generation, is to the succeeding one a palpable error. But it is urged, that as laws act with undeviating regularity, it is out of the sphere of their natural action to resuscitate the dead. This however is the very question at issue, and is not to be decided by simple assertion. Immutable law—considered simply as to its immutability—embraces nothing beyond the fact that certain

precise causes invariably produce certain precise effects; but it does not follow that there may not be a combined action of various laws capable of producing effects beyond our conceived notions of the ordinary course of natural order, which neither human reason can account for, nor human understanding comprehend. And although law is always absolutely true and precise in its effects, yet the field of its operations is marked by incessant change. In no hour of the earth's existence do its conditions exactly correspond with those of any other hour; probably during no two seconds of its existence did it ever occupy the same position in space. Its internal and surface economy has been characterized by constantly progressive change, from the time when it was a molten mass, until it became an admirably adapted abode for physical and intellectual life. Therefore, experience—which only partially reveals the past, and affords no positive clue to the future—is incompetent to declare what may or may not be possibly effected by law, the adaptability of which to general conditions of infinite variety is so marvellously intricate,

that it utterly baffles human ingenuity to assign any limit to the measure of its capacity; and it is fairly conceivable, that at some future period, science may be able to make it evident to the senses that a power, undoubtedly far beyond human conception, can produce effects, such as are known to us as miracles, not only without prejudice to immutable laws, but by their control and through their instrumentality; should such a time arrive—and there is nothing which precludes its possibility—the word “miracles” will lose whatever significance may be at present attached to it, as contrary to the order of nature, and will subside into an expression denoting the extensive power of the All-supreme.

If the above reasoning is efficient, the question—no longer one of impossibility—turns upon probability, and evidence not purely materialistic, but drawn from the working of the mental, moral and emotional faculties, is here admissible. It may possibly be objected, that the basis upon which this evidence rests is undeterminate, not sufficiently defined, and subject to theory and imagination; and there are fair grounds

for this objection, if it is applied individually; but when considered collectively, individual error in one direction, is neutralized by individual error in an opposite one, and the mean of a general tendency forms a fair basis for inductive reasoning; and as all things are subject to law—the unerring truthfulness of which makes us feel assured that nothing is purposeless, and that an ultimate truth lies at the bottom of everything existent—the existence of the above faculties implies the existence of laws which govern them; a set purpose for their action and utility; and an ultimate truth relative to matters by which they are affected, open to their attainment. In applying this we find that miracles are identified with theology, whence their source is derived; no theology is without them; and the possession of a strong theological emotion, in most instances amounting to a passion, is a strongly marked characteristic of the whole human race. This emotion, or passion, whether fed from sources more or less pure, or more or less corrupt, is the same in all; and being thus universal, and evidently part of the mental and

moral constitution of mankind, it follows—with the evidence before us that nothing is purposeless—either that its existence, if objectless, is an exception to universal law, or that an ultimate truth of a nature to satisfy its highest aspirations, is an existent fact.

It is evident that there can be but one true religion, and the falseness of the rest must apply also to their attendant miracles. The only means, short of a direct revelation, by which we can determine the truth of a religion, is by results, as shown in its moral and physical effect in individuals; in the amount of refined civilization and culture in communities; and in the tendency to a dominant prosperity in nations, which follow the observance of its laws; and reason leads to the conclusion that the best test of its truth, is the approach towards perfection in its general working and effects, in relative proportion to the amount of the observance of its requirements. A religion which can stand such a test, offers in itself the strongest presumptive evidence, that the miracles inseparably connected with it, are simply matters of fact. Assuming then, that science fur-

nishes no positive evidence against the possibility of miracles; that there is no known law conclusively opposed to them; and that the inexperience of them in a present generation is only negative evidence of a low order; and knowing also that all phenomena are subject to a power, which, to the highest human comprehension, is absolutely limitless; it is also assumable, that, that power may have been occasionally exercised through the medium of human action and intelligence; not only for the purpose of some immediate benefit, but also as the most efficient means for exercising a spiritual influence for the purpose of a mental, moral, and intellectual advancement in that, and in all subsequent generations; as well as the most effective way for the introduction and establishment of a theology—eventually to become universal—which the untrained human mind would not accept, in the first instance, without the conjunction of an urgent and extraordinary appeal to its greater susceptibility of conviction through physical demonstration; and thus physical effects would bear witness to spiritual truths closely connected with them, which truths, when fully received, would in time

yield evidence to the efficiency of the means of their reception. There is also more of probability than of inconsistency in the assumption that the chosen medium for whatever may appear to be an exceptional manifestation of power, should be an intelligence of a higher order, but of the same nature as those for which the benefit of such manifestation would be especially intended. Should it be objected that a supreme power would effect its object by more direct measures, attended with more immediate results; it is urged in reply, that if the supreme wisdom thought fit to perform acts which to us may have the appearance of a divergence from natural law, and which have been so far followed by such effective results as to lead us to the same conclusion as that to which all nature points, that "whatever is, is right," surely it is not consistent in the objector to miracles to require one which, in his estimation, would be of a higher order. A mind so constituted would reject belief even "though one rose from the dead."

It is a fact established with satisfactory conclusiveness, that progressiveness is one of the chief features in the universal order of

nature, which applies to spiritual as well as to temporal matters; and the slightest reflection leads us to recognise the wisdom which so ordered it. The downfall of everything dates from its inaction. The ancient Theologies of Egypt, Greece and Rome ceased to exist from their inability to contend with advancing thought; and we may fairly predict that those now in existence, which for ages have remained stationary in the influence they have exercised—not only over the morality—but over the habits, customs and institutions of their votaries, are doomed to extinction. The argument frequently used against Christianity, that the perfect fulfillment of its precepts is above the attainment of humanity, is as fine a tribute to the likelihood of its durability, as its most ardent supporters could desire; for so long as human nature exists, it will not cease to struggle towards an acknowledged standard of perfection; consequently the influence of Christianity will continue to be, as it always has been, a progressive influence. It was introduced under apparently the most adverse conditions; it was opposed to the spirit of the age; its founder and its promoters

were outcasts, despised, massacred, and oppressed in every form which a jealous, an angry, and a vindictive oppression could take; yet such was its vitality, and power of progression, that it gradually became the ruling spirit of the world. Individually we live in comfort, security, and intellectual advancement under laws framed in accordance with its teaching; communities actuated by it, obtain ever increasing success in social undertakings; and nations which profess it are supreme over others in power, civilization, art, literature, science, and all desirable attainments which represent progress. And if we closely examine all the complicated streams of opposition against which these great results have been achieved, we cannot fail to recognize the demonstration of a spiritual power, fully as miraculous as those physical manifestations, which so materially assisted in ushering in the thorough revolution in ethics and theology, in thought and in action, by which the world has so signally benefited.

THE END.